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AUTHOR Shermis, S. Samuel; Barth, James L.
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ABSTRACT

Different concepts of the terms problem, problem solving, and social problem have created philosophical confusion in the social studies movement. The three approaches in social studies history--social science, citizenship transmission, and reflective inquiry--exemplify the incompatibility of the terms. A brief examination of the history of social studies reveals that the discipline defined problems in an attempt to deal with the conditions brought about by urbanization and industrialization. Social scientists either identified topics (which became known as problems) worthy of study or perceived pathological and dysfunctional behavior which they took to be self-evident departure from accepted values. The citizenship transmitters consider problem solving in the context of the problem exercise, which aids students in acquiring skills, attitudes, and knowledge. A typical question might be, "consider the problems Roosevelt faced in 1933." Finally, the problem from the standpoint of reflective inquiry has its roots in Dewey's philosophy, which states that the problem-solving process begins with a state of doubt followed by the individual's dividing the total situation into functionally related components. It is a transformational process. The implication is that if there is no effective thought without internalization of a problem, teachers must present students with discrepancies among data that generate the psychological tension essential to problem internalization. (Author/KC)

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ABSTRACT

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THE FUNCTION OF PROBLEMS AND PROBLEM-SOLVING IN THE HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES MOVEMENT

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by

S. Samuel Shermis
James L. Barth
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Our research over the past fifteen years suggests to us that there are at least three traditions: social studies taught as citizenship transmission, social studies taught as social science and social studies taught as reflective inquiry. This does not exclude other ways to organize and conceptualize social studies. What we have said is that the above three traditions have historical and philosophical roots that can be traced and verified. We think it is important that social studies educators continue to identify their foundations, for it is out of those foundations that a consistent meaning and application of social studies will emerge.

We have said in earlier works, Defining the Social Studies, 1977, and The Nature of the Social Studies, 1978, that social studies teachers can find the tradition that they feel most compatible and accommodating to their point of view by identifying their purpose, method and content. Knowing a preferred purpose, methods and content teachers could identify themselves with one of the three traditions. We believe this still holds true, but we have also come to believe that the key indicator to identifying a tradition rests with how "problem" is defined.

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In fact, we have come to believe that all significant questions in the field of social studies start from a concept of problem. How a problem is conceived conditions answers to what should be the purpose, method and content of social studies. The tradition followed is, we believe, closely keyed to how problem is defined and applied. The paper offered at the 1980 NCSS/FSS meeting will develop our thinking on the importance of "problem" as the one key to interpreting social studies.

Presentation for Foundations of the Social Studies/SIG
NCSS 1980

The Function of Problems and Problem-Solving in the History of the Social Studies Movement

by

S. Samuel Shermis, Associate Professor, Purdue University

and

James L. Barth, Associate Professor, Purdue University

Introduction

We have made the point before, indeed quite frequently: lack of clarity concerning the ideas that give direction to the social studies has led to a promiscuous eclecticism in which blurring, miscommunication, confusion, conflict and, ultimately, ineffectiveness, are the norm.[1] In this paper we continue to chart philosophical confusion by an extensive analysis of different uses of the related terms "problem," "problem-solving" and "social problem."

We concentrate on these three terms because they would appear to be the most fundamental concepts in the social studies movement. In our attempts to explore the

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[1]The confusion has been both basic and persistent. Consider the very terms "social studies" and "social sciences." In an early NCSS yearbook--Fourth Yearbook: the Social Studies Curriculum. Philadelphia: McKinley Publishing Company, 1934--basic disagreement is reflected from the first to the last page. Thus, while the title of the book is "social studies curriculum" editor Howard Wilson's forward deals only with the "social sciences," stating that ". . .all these and more have their reverberations in the current answer to the question 'What shall we teach in the social sciences?'" On the one hand, contributor H. Gordon Hullfish calls for ". . .the steady reconstruction of the outlook of the student, at each successive grade level, in order that conflicting values complascently held may be replaced by a set of consistent values agressively cherished." (page 30). This is a fair restatement of John Dewey's position and reflects what both authors have called the Reflective Inquiry position. On the other hand, another contributor, L.A. White, Superintendent of Schools from Minot, North Dakota states that the "social sciences are being brought forward" as "offering the most abundant and effective opportunities for the development of reasoning and thinking on vital problems concerned and correlated with life." (page 46). But Mr. White's approach to "citizenship" consists of the student ". . .must accept his full share of obligations and responsibilities. . .for, upon the school rests the obligation of making provision for exercise and practice in the acceptance of obligations and responsibilities." Whether the topic is citizenship, democracy, problem-solving--or even the very title of the field itself--consensus is now and seemingly has always been absent.

origins of our field, we found seeming consensus upon one large idea: there is radical social change within our society and because of this and because of the nature of democratic self-government, we require profound change in the way we train a future citizenry to deal with problems and make decisions. There was also apparent consensus that the mixture of memory-level drill and indoctrination into "basic" values would not continue to serve our society as it had in the recent past when a simpler agrarian society could agree upon the ultimacy of Protestant, democratic and capitalist values. What we also found, however, was that while there was surface consensus upon the need for a new approach to education and while the social studies was seen as the place par excellence for training a future citizenry in problem-solving, there was no agreement below the surface. Indeed, as we--and a growing number of our colleagues--discovered, there was no agreement upon the key terms, especially upon the definition of a problem, upon the origins and implications of a social problem and upon what was implied by the problem-solving process.

We find ourselves having said these very words before. One may ask, Why has this issue exerted so much attraction for both of you? Why do you keep returning to the same themes? The answer is: Because the field insists upon perpetrating the same piece of comfortable self-delusion, decade after decade. We persist in believing that eclecticism in theory and practice is a sure sign of flexibility and the willingness to compromise. Our argument is that eclecticism, in theory and practice, is an invitation to insoluble difficulties. To mix beliefs that guide practice in opposing directions promotes confusion, never-ending conflict, low morale, poor teaching and, ultimately, diminished citizenship.

Eclecticism, as we shall see in more detail, has been institutionalized such that it is common practice to talk and think about social studies in one set of words and perform in ways which are inherently contradictory. Consider the following references in 19th Century texts--to a "thoughtful study of history," to an appreciation of the fact "that events hinge upon each other," to the need to "study things in a scien-

tific spirit," to the need for ". . .an intelligent appreciation of his (sic.) own country," to the need to ". . .analyze and to form critical judgments."[2] But what virtually all students of the day-to-day, moment-to-moment events of the classroom have found is a mixture of emphasis upon low level concepts, relentless indoctrination in "right belief" and repetitive drill over much of the same material, year after year. What we also find is that no matter how often these criticisms are made in the scholarly literature, most teachers, parents and administrators reject them. There has been no significant reform in the social studies in this century.

We conclude, then, by saying that we deny that there is a high level synthesis at the end of the rainbow, if only Barr, Barth and Shermis would care to seek for it. There really is incompatability built into the structure of the social studies, and one can find no better and more serious example of unresolved conflict than the terms "problem," "problem-solving" and "social problem." Let us examine in some detail how these terms are employed by the three traditions, Social Science, Citizenship Transmission and Reflective Inquiry.[3]

The 19th Century: Background for Curriculum Change

The period of criticism directed at schools which was to result in considerable philosophical re-evaluation did not begin, of course, with Dewey, with the Progrsssive movement or with the Muckrakers. The evidence suggests to us that not very long after the Civil War a good many American critics gradually grew aware that the basic literacy education of the early 19th Century would no longer suffice. While it might have been

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[2]These contemporary sounding objectives are discussed in Shermis and Barth, "Education for Passivity: An Exploration into the Philosophical Origins of Citizenship Transmission in Social Studies," an unpublished manuscript, Purdue University, W. Lafayette, Indiana, 1980.

[3]Which we developed first in our "Defining the Social Studies: An Exploration of Three Traditions, Social Education, 34 (November, 1970) 743-751 and later in Robert Barr, Barth and Shermis, Defining the Social Studies, Washington: National Council for the Social Studies, 1977, and, same authors, The Nature of the Social Studies, Palm Springs: ETC, 1978.

defensible to establish a public school modeled along lines of a factory or business in the early 19th Century,[4] while it might have been acceptable to assume that the task was to Americanize German, Scots, Irish and Welsh immigrants into mainstream Protestant, democratic traditions, while the assumptions of Jacksonian democracy that any normal person could handle all citizenship functions--while all of these may have been tenable beliefs in 1830, we would argue that after the Civil War, none of these assumptions or educational traditions escaped searching criticism. Let us briefly survey some of the radical social changes that were taking place after the 1860s.

Immigration. Not only did the character of immigration change after the Civil War, so did the numbers of those immigrating. Whereas Germans and British had dominated immigration throughout most of our history, after the Civil War--in particular, after 1881--all of this was to change. Italians, Polish and Russian Jews, orientals and others began sailing to our shores, first in a trickle and then a flood. By the year 1892 Castle Garden, the older immigration receiving area, proved inadequate and the larger Ellis Island took its place. The new character of immigrants changed the realities of the United States. We were no longer seeing a relatively few immigrants who began their lives in the new country as willing recipients of democracy, capitalism and our other national values. The new immigrants provided two significant problems. First, by no means did all wish to see themselves transmuted automatically into an "acceptable" model of "American," Under the press of an often hostile society, they often crowded together, retaining their language, foods and many vestiges of their older beliefs. And many proved, to use Novak's term, unmeltable.[5] Second, the new immigrants brought

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[4]See Shermis, "The Business-Industrial--Bureaucratic Model: An Analysis of the Origins and Basis of the American Public School System," a paper given to the first Ernest E. Bayles Memorial Lecture Series, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, 1978; "What Models for the Study of Education?" Thresholds in Education IV, (August, 1978) 19-25; Wilma Longstreet. "Education Great Boondoggle." Journal of Teacher Education, 27 (Summer, 1976) 136-139.

[5]See the analysis of Michael Novak. The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics; Politics and Culture in the Seventies. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

with them what turned out to be exotic competitors to indigenous political philosophy. Whether it was the socialism of Marx, Engels and Lenin or of LaSalle, Fourier or Owen, whether syndicalism, the nihilism and anarchism of Russian romantic revolutionaries such as Bakunin or, the labor Zionism of Jewish theoreticians, the new immigrants brought with them serious competitors to individualism and laissez faire capitalism. In particular, they challenged the assumption that the government should be a neutral referee, permitting each individual's unalloyed greed to determine the character of society.[6] What began as thousands of interminable heated discussions over tea in the lower east side of New York or in Hull House in Chicago then became experimental social policy at the local level in the teens and 1920s and, after Roosevelt in the 1930s, national policy. Those who have feared that importation of dangerous and radical "foreign" ideas might subvert the conventional wisdom grounded their anxieties in fact: this is precisely what happened. In retrospect, it is clear that the suspect foreigners did import exotic doctrines through Ellis Island and that these functioned as radical, effective competitors to the belief in the privacy of individual self-interest that had become the absolute metaphysical cornerstone of developing 19th Century capitalism.

Urban Growth

Both as a result of the new immigration and a consequence of the growth of industrialism that received enormous impetus in the Civil War, mines, mills, factories and railroads began to dominate the Post-Civil War landscape. New York, Chicago, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Pittsburgh and other medium sized towns became in the 19th Century what they are today: enormous, sprawling, congested centers of population growth, replete with the inevitable accompaniment of instant urbanization: crime, prostitution, lack of sanitation, exploitation, drug use and a transcendent

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[6] We are, of course, aware that this statement, essentially the core belief of Adam Smith laissez faire capitalism never was operational. Our government was at no time neutral and, by means of direct or indirect subsidies, encouraged and supported some at the expense of others.

flowering of graft and political corruption arising from the union of politicians and ethnic enclaves. Chief among 19th Century urban-industrial phenomena is the rise of labor unions. If John Kenneth Galbraith is correct--that is, the growth of political and economic power in one sector soon enough yields the growth of its opposite and "countervailing" number--the rise of organized labor was inevitable. Given the nature of strikes and of endogenous American violence, the post-Civil War years saw a good many long, drawnout and often pitched battles between frustrated union members and the army, police or private gangs hired by manufacturers.

The U.S. as an International Power. Reluctantly and suddenly our country found itself becoming a Power--with a capital "P," that is, a nation that dealt with the other great Powers of the world. Whatever one may think of the morality of the Spanish-American War, after 1898, first in Cuba and the Philippines and then elsewhere, we saw ourselves drawn into what is called "international affairs." By the end of the second decade of this century, we were a part of just what we had been taught to despise throughout our existence: a conglomerate of alternatively antagonistic and cooperative ethnic, nationalistic and economic entities. After the First World War, we discovered that we could not help but be entangled in the wars, treaties, conferences, disarmament debates, ethnic and political conflicts and power struggles that had characterized the "rest" of the world since time began. That is, those people who had considered themselves both above and outside international hostilities now found themselves a member of just that club whose invitation most would have liked to spurn.

Technology and Values. Although all of us have been made aware that something called "industrialism" descended upon our land in the 19th Century, typically students are required to commit the names of Whitney, McCormick et al. and or their inventions to memory. What is almost always ignored are the more subtle effects of this revolution--the intangible erosion of long-held attitudes, beliefs and values. What the industrial

revolution brought, John Dewey never tired of pointing out,[7] was a permanent and disruptive change in the environment and--in ways that are always obscure--radical alteration of the nations' outlooks, beliefs and philosophical assumptions. For some, of course, the more the physical conditions changed--and here we are quoting Dewey--the more loudly we repeated the older creeds.[8] Dewey must have glimpsed in 1920 that we would, for instance, persist in celebrating, the virtures of sexual innocence, premarital chastity, fidelity and monogamy, while all around us contraceptives, antibiotics and an instant transportation network made these values less and less organic and instrumental. By the third decade of the 20th Century most social critics of whatever orientation were convinced that the core values of our society were threatened. Of course they did not agree on the nature of these values nor what would replace them. But, 50, 60 and 70 years ago it was abundantly clear that our society was changing and that the populace was not prepared to cope with the change.

In Sum. In sum, radical and complex social change had altered the structure of our national existence. Most of the major thinkers, social critics, social scientists and philosopher of the time glimpsed this change. Those who are concerned with education responded by detailing the inadequacy of older arrangements. The inculcation of a value system fashioned for a simpler age, the endless memorization of facts sanctified by hundreds of years of celebratory use, the relentless indoctrination into right

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[7] In many of his works but principally in Human Nature and Conduct. An Introduction to Social Psychology. New York: The Modern Library, 1922, The Public and Its Problems. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927 and Reconstruction in Philosophy, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1920. We point out that this these first occurred to Dewey when he was the foreign correspondent of the New Republic during the late teens and early '20s, during a period of revolution and cataclysmic change in both Europe and Asia.

[8] This point and the entire context is discussed at length in Shermis, "The Social and Political Philosophy of John Dewey: Its Implications for Social Studies," an unpublished doctoral dissertation, the University of Kansas, 1961.

belief--in short, just the educational process that had worked so well to integrate a century of Scots-Irish, English and Germans into an agrarian America began to appear more and more regressive. Educational philosophers of widely different views agreed upon at least one thing: the extraordinary change in cherished assumptions about the nature of government, ethical relations, the meaning of human existence and of conceptions of beauty meant that we simply could not continue our educational procedures as we had in the past.

The Early 20th Century and a Search for a Rationale

If the previous pages sound familiar, indeed shopworn, it is because all of us have heard these ideas expressed so frequently, When we say that there was a widespread perception that the nature of our contemporary social existence made many conscious of the need for reform in education, we are hardly uttering anything novel or surprising. We merely wish to make one point explicit: social studies arose out of the perception that something needed to be done to prepare the young to assume their roles in a complex and rapidly changing democracy which needed to cope with new realities at home and throughout the world. Our thesis, then, is simply this: while there was abundant conflict and dissensus on many points, there were some assumptions that the founding fathers of the social studies movement seemed to share. All seemed to agree that there ought to be some kind of relationship between the social studies--or, as the term was used interchangably then and now, the social sciences--and a self-governing society. All agreed that the social studies ought somehow prepare one for what many called "solutions" to the sort of staggering social problems that we enumerated a moment ago. All agreed that the eventual outcome was an individual who would be able to utilize the "problem-solving process" the better to function as an autonomous citizen. And it is at this point, finally, that we articulate the emphasis of this paper as a series of questions: Why do we argue that the definition of problem one chooses is a fundamental, perhaps the most fundamental, concept in one's theoretical assumptions about the social studies? How does this conception of problem relate to "social problem" and "problem-

solving"? What are the differing approaches to these terms held by members of the three different social studies traditions?

Consistent with our procedures in the past, we argue that if a mode of problem-solving was to be learned by future citizens, it is incumbent upon us as specialists in the foundation of the social studies to understand the critical assumptions held by those who fashioned the field.

Because the term "problem" and "problem-solving" have been an inextricable part of the social studies and because John Dewey introduced the words to American teachers in 1910[9], the authors--and probably others--have been confused. We thought that social studies teachers who referred to problem-solving had Dewey in mind and were paying careful attention to his structures on problem-sensing. We confused correlation with causation; we confused simultaneity of use with identity of meaning. Social studies practitioners, in effect, engaged in word magic--invoking the proper effect by the repeated and prayerful use of the correct words. Perhaps, we thought, by saying the right words we could induce the practices which hoped "problem-solving" would create. But word magic obscured the many different uses of the words, hid from us the fact that there were many conceptions that went by the terms "problem" and "problem-solving."

Let us now consider the use of the terms by social scientists, tracing the words from their 19th Century origins.

Positivists Among Social Scientists

As has been pointed out in a dissertation[10] recently complete, the social scientists

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[9]Dewey wrote How We Think in 1910, Boston: D.C. Heath and Company and revised it for Heath in 1933.

[10]This dissertation, in the final stages, is by Michael Lybarger at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

--principally sociologists--who heavily influenced the various national committees which were formulating the social studies curriculum and objectives, were influenced by relatively few persons. Virtually all of them were disciples of the European school known even then as Positivism. Without describing the doctrines of Positivism in any detail, suffice it to say that Positivists shared one common assumption about the nature of reality and of knowledge. Using different terminology, various commentators seem to agree:

> The sole business of science is to formulate generalizations regarding the relations actually observed to exist among events

To discover such laws is ". . .to finally understand the world as it really is."[11] We wish to emphasize that Comte, the founder of Positivism, not only dismissed metaphysics as irrelevant but assumed that there was an objective reality which could be known on its own terms. Thus, one of Comte's more enthusiastic successors says,

> Our faith is, however, based upon demonstrated truths, not upon authority or tradition, or more subjective conceptions, but upon objective realities which can be seen and known of all men.[12]

To what use would Comte and in particular and Positivists in general make of their knowledge

> But positivism, as Comte called his view, would be a real science of society--a social physics, as it were. This scientific sociology would be divided into two main branches: social statics, concerned with describing the laws of order, and social dynamics, concerned with describing the laws of progress.[13]

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[11]See the discussion of Comte and especially "The Law of the Three Stages" in W.T. Jones, Kant to Wittgenstein and Sartre. A History of Western Philosophy Second Edition. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1969, p. 175 Also useful, although obviously somewhat dated, is William James, "Philosophy and its Critics," in Daniel J. Bronstein, et al. Basic Problems of Philosophy. Selected Readings with Introductions. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1947.

[12]C.G. David, A Positivist Primer. New York: John Kent, 1871, p. 35.

[13]Jones, op. cit., p. 176.

In David's language, perhaps somewhat more simplistic and naive but still a faithful echo of the master, Comte:

> A step farther will compel trained scientific specialists to study the phenomena of society with a view to getting at the laws which control us, so that we may obey after we discover them.[14]

A brief summary, then, of the contribution of Positivists to social science may perhaps be phrased as follows:

> Just as there are objective laws which govern the physical world, there are also laws, capable of being known to all men, which may be discovered and unambiguously understood. There ought to be a science of society whose function is to discover and promulgate laws that govern the behavior of men in groups. The purpose of discovering such laws is not only to find out the way the world really is but to make use of such knowledge to regulate our behavior and move in the correct path.

As we all know, within a fairly brief time, it was impossible to read social philosophers, sociologists or others imbued with Positivist zeal without discovering e.g., Marxian or later Tohynbean laws of history, Smith's laws of the market place, Ricardo's Iron Law of Wages, Spengler's Laws of Historical Evoluation, Thorndike's early Four Laws of Learning--and a host of others. Although it is possible to trace the genesis of this outlook even earlier than Aquinas and Aristotle to the pre-Socratic Greeks, for our purposes suffice it to say that social scientists who exerted powerful influence on the nascent social studies movement conceived of their field as being responsible for the discovery of laws. Once discovered, one then adjusts one's behavior in light of these laws. Once one obtains social scientific data, one then rearranges, reorganizes or somehow modifies social institutions to the end that people will sooner and more expediently do what they must do.

Many social scientists apparently held this view which led, not surprisingly, to an efflorescence of research and of data on all sorts of disparate social phenomena.

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[14] David, op. cit., p. 35.

Many, however, held another view about the proper nature of social science data. This point of view--which may well be related to Comte's concern for improving society--can be stated as follows:

> Social scientists are not objective and dispassionate observers who can only gather data and publish it. Social scientists are people who must live in and of a social order. As such, they are responsible for improving, for ameliorating the serious social problems that exist. Their data must be for the purpose of lightening the burden of mankind--of reducing vice, folly, violence, dirt, disease, ignorance and disorganization.

We should like to argue that both conceptions of social science and of the proper use of social science data seem to have found their way into the thinking of the fathers of the social studies. Thus, if one reads the texts of the 19th and early 20th Centuries--in particular those written in the sociology of social problems--one discovers a very consistent theme: social scientists must somehow get their information to the young who will soon become active citizens. Unless we do so, our society shall soon become engulfed by the growing tide of social problems. Social scientists are responsible for improving the evils of runaway industrialism, crime, prostitution, slums, lack of sanitation, crowding and so on.

How is a Problem Defined? Given this context, we are ready to inquire into the definition of problem, problem-solving and social problem employed by social scientists of this period. Of course, there is little in the way of a self-conscious and elaborate definition of these terms. But we can analyze the use of language, the use of metaphors, the examples, and the allusion and infer a definition.[15] We propose that by the 20th Century, one can identify two approaches to the definitions of problem and problem-solving.

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[15]The authors did this in two mongraphs, both unpublished. See "What is a Social Problem? How do Sociologists Define the Term," and "Liberal Intellectual Journals and the Perception of Social Problems," both Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, 1978 and 1979, respectively.

First, there appear to have been certain phenomena that years of tradition required to define as a variety of disciplinary problem.[16] The process by which certain phenomena were "staked out" by members of a given intellectual discipline such that they became part of the field is a complex and interesting process. It happened, of course, in the developing 19th Century social sciences. We see, rather early on, that all questions relating to the dynastic lines of ancient Egypt became part of archaeology. By the end of the 19th Century we find that anthropologists laid claim to the subject of kinship. And, by the same token, it is fairly evident that after a few decades one can see a clear predeliction or tendency by sociologists to study crime, migratory trends and literacy rates as topics or subjects, i.e., as problems, as behavior wihch members of this discipline have agreed should be studied.

A second approach to the study of problems is what one might call social problems. We discovered that early sociologists did not define a social problem as much as they identified one. That is, for reasons which we shall explain in a moment, they looked--usually askance--at certain behavior and labeled it as a problem. At a later time--during the 1920s and 1930s, sociologists decided that they needed a formal definition for the term "social problem" and eventually they believed that a social problem meant

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[16] See the authors' "We All Know What a Problem is. Don't We?" Peabody Journal of Education 55 (April, 1978) 287-306. See, in particular, our discussion of Disciplinary Problems. See also the authors "Defining Social Problems," Theory and Research in Social Education, VII (Spring, 1979) 1-19. In "We All Know What a Problem Is. Don't We?" we argued that "disciplinary problems" are created after a period of time as a particular intellectual discipline habitually assumes that certain phenomena are inherently part of its proper concerns. Thus, while "consumption" and "production" are claimed by economists both the "redshift" and Doppler" effects belong to astrophycists. (Of course there are always jurisdictional disputes as different disciplines wrangle over the same phenomena. But we cannot stop to discuss, e.g., whether neurotic behavior belongs properly to clinical psychologists or psychiatrists or indeed whether it is proper to talk about certain kinds of nuts now that "neurosis" has officially been discarded by psychiatrists.) We also talked about problem exercises, which are used by all teachers to give students opportunity to practice certain skills. We shall discuss both points in a few pages but we would like to alert our readers to the conflation of both uses of problem, i.e., the tendency to join by disciplinary problems and problem exercises.

that a large number of persons perceived certain behavior as deviating from and threatening a particularly important social value.[17] By the late 19th Century there was consensus among many sociologists that drug use, crime, slums, corruption, etc., were to be defined as social problems.

In brief, then, there are at least two strands, two perhaps more continuing traditions within the tribe of social scientists. Over time, certain topics became known as problems. As tradition within the various social sciencies accumulated, it became customary for researchers to identify these topics as worthy of study, analysis and attention. They became part and parcel of the discipline. The other tradition developed among social scientists who looked at the landscape and saw pathological and dysfunctional behavior which they took to be self-evident departures from commonly accepted philosophical values.

We believe that the former approach to the definition of a problem was taken by Positivists who believed that their function was to uncover or discover law. To them, a problem was simple a way of organizing one's systematic inquiry to the end that the data would reveal the absolute laws governing all human behavior. Knowing--becoming acquainted with the law--would lead to the correct ways of behaving. We suggest that the latter approach was taken by those whom we have identified as reformers, those with essentially altrustic motives. To identify, for instance, drugs and prostitution as "social problems" was to enlighten the populace, provide useful data to legislators and others and in other ways to bring about amelioration of a troubled situation. It is our understanding that the differences between the two positions reflected a power struggle within the ranks of social scientists and that the struggle was both intense and of long-standing. For our purposes, however, we should like to argue that both outlooks on the meaning of social problem were accepted by both professionals and laymen. Thus, certainly by the mid-20th Century, it seems clear that most thought that certain

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[17] We describe what we take to be three phases in the history of the sociologists' definition of "social problem" in "What is a Social Problem? How do Sociologists Define the Term," (an unpublished manuscript.) W. Lafayette: Purdue University, June, 1978.

disciplines were in charge of certain problems and that a problem exists because people believe that there is threat to an important value or norm.

We should now like to suggest--as C. Wright Mills has already done[18]--that given the predominantly rural, agrarian background of many 19th Century sociologists, those who carved out the city as their special area of expertise were primed to regard everything they saw as pathological. With little understanding of the nature of politics at the ward level, they perceived nothing but corrupt alliances between politicians and ethnic enclaves. Given their Protestant orientation to sexuality, other sexual orientation were regarded self-evidently and promiscuous immoral. In short, social scientists who were raised and enculturated to a predominantly rural, Protestant, agrarian view of the world, a good deal of what was happening to post-Civil War cities must have seemed pathological, deviant and problematic. We also suggest that most of the social scientists did not participate in Marxian doctrines and therefore did not define all social problems as essentially functions of an economic system that would soon pass into oblivion--i.e., a conception of social problems held by Marxists in which the last stages of capitalism "caused" poverty, crime, drug use, etc. It would

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[18] We discovered a most interesting reference to Mills and his analysis of the early sociologists:

> When sociology moved to America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it took on a reformist, moralistic, antiurban orientation, somewhat different than the early European perspectives, and, accordingly, the study of specific social problems developed. . ."The study of social problems belong exclusively to a relatively small group of ideologically prejudiced sociologists, those who seemingly were driven by a sense of mission to identify evil andcure it.". . .Mills suggests that /a certain ideological stance and set of concerns/ permitted theorists to show humanitarian concern for those influenced by problem behavior, without necessitating the development of theories or programs for action that would severely threaten the established status quo or vested interests.

See Ritchie P. Lowry, Social Problems A Critical Analysis of Theories and Public Policy. Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company, 1974, p.8.

appear, on the basis of our reading, that most social scientists accepted the basic structure of society and did not believe in an endogenous and inherent lethal structural weakness.

In ways which have been described elsewhere, this approach to problems found its way into thinking about social studies.[19] The implication, as we shall see, is briefly this: students were taught to believe that a problem exists when that problem was defined by a social science discipline. They were taught that all necessary data were provided by the teacher through lectures and textbooks. And, finally, they were taught that the conclusions that the teacher or text author reached--almost invariably implicit and unrecognized--were the proper conclusions. This practice, which of course differs not at all from what other cultures do to indoctrinate its young, was reinforced by the entire 19th Century history of Positivism in the social sciences. For, Positivists preached, once the teacher and/or text has pointed out the problem and provided the data, it follows that students must be guided to perceive the correct implications or solution. It also assumes that there is a "right way," a right set of core values that ought to function as the foundation of right decision-making. What we have called "discovery" and problem exercises follow from this position.

In a 1930 textbook on civics[20] the author states:

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[19]In the authors' "Social Studies and the Problem of Knowledge: A Re-Examination of Edgar Bruce Wesley's Classic Definition of the Social Studies," Theory and Research in Social Education, 6(1978) 31-43; "Defining Social Problems," Theory and Research in Social Education 8(Spring, 1979) 1-19; "Social Studies Teachers and Liberal Intellectual Journals: Helping Teachers in the Problem Solving Process," a paper given to the National Council for the Social Studies, November, 1979, Portland, Oregon; and "Social Studies Goals: The Historical Perspective," Journal of Research and Development in Education 13(1980) 1-11.

[20]Charles Clinton Peters, Objectives and Procedures in Civil Education. An Intensive Study in Curriculum Construction. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1930.

> The instruction may be organized around problems. Problems are puzzles in situations. Their solution involves the making of choices that can be found to be the only acceptable ones.[21] (own italics)

In the after-chapter questions, the author then asks a number of questions, including:[22]

> School parties can undoubtedly contribute to social democracy; can they contribute anything to preparation for political democracy?
>
> To what extent do you believe school savings banks, and other agencies for teaching thrift in childhood, are likely to affect adult practice in regard to saving?

One must note two things. The author's definition of problem is such that once one has formulatedthe problem, the "solution" involves choice that "can be found to be the only acceptable ones." That is, the choices are taken to be inherent in the proper formulation of a problem. One must then note that the author tells readers that thrift savings banks and other school-organized opportunities to teach good economics are useful but are limited and need to be continuously reitereated by teachers. One then need not wonder for any extended length of time what kind of student answer is expected to the question, "To what extent do you believe that school savings banks, and other agencies for teaching thrift in childhood, are likely to affect adult practice in regard to savings?"

Problems as Defined by Citizenship Transmitters

Some time ago, in a discussion of a student teacher with a local supervising public school teacher, we mentioned the term "problem-solving." The public school teacher stated that yes, everyone was involved in problem-solving; just the other day the U.S. history class studied the problem that faced Roosevelt. At the time, we naturally thought that the teacher had no grasp of problem-solving, that by no stretch of the imagination could the "problem" that faced Roosevelt be confused with the Deweyan conception of a puzzling and unsettling situation that needed to be cleared up, to be understood. There was no grasp, we thought, of the underlying reality: that the

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[21] Ibid., p. 140.

[22] Ibid., p. 145.

"problem" that faced Roosevelt was hardly a problem--either to the teacher or to his students. We thought that the use of problem in these terms conveyed no intelligible sense of a problematic situation.

We now believe that the teacher did possess a conception of a problem--not, to be sure, Dewey's and not related in any sense to the Reflective Inquiry tradition. The teacher's conception of problem is what we have come to call "problem exercise." The problem exercise[23] is not a problem in the sense that anyone internalizes puzzlement, confusion or any of the other psychological correlations Dewey describes. The paradigm of a problem exercise is the old algebraic saw: If Train A leaves the station going north traveling 75 miles an hour and Train B leaves the same station traveling in the same direction at 90 miles an hour, when will Train B catch up with Train A? The purpose of this exercise is, of course, to get students to conceptualize in algebraic symbols. That is, the problem exercise is designed to afford students an opportunity to practice particular skills. In addition, as we have already stated, and at the same time, students are provided an opportunity to acquire attitudes and knowledge. Thus, the problem exercises simultaneously provides students and opportunity to internalize the right values, beliefs and attitudes and the correct skills, knowledge and techniques.

By the same token, that question about the "problem" that faced Roosevelt is designed to encourage students to practice skills as well as to internalize a particular value. Consider the proper answer to, What is the problem that Roosevelt faced in 1933? The range of possible answers, of course, include "unemployment," "a depression," "failing banks" or some other fragmentary description of the Great Depression. When a student has given such an answer, the teacher's function ordinarily is to lecture off the top of that answer and reiterate essentially the same information that one can find in the textbook. The student has two tasks. First, he is to memorize the detailed

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[23]Which we dealt with in "We All Know What a Problem Is. Don't We?" op. cit.

information which will be tested at a later time, ordinarily through a true false or some other "objective" test. Second--and this must not be overlooked--students are supposed to internalize a particular moral position, value, set of attitudes or beliefs. Although, of course, students will soon forget the detailed content of the information they have memorized, they are expected to undergo a process involving self-discipline. They are expected to internalize a value: that valuem to simplify, is hidden in the formula: The assumed right attitude should be: Even though our society underwent a severe trial, the soundness of the system once again manifested itself so that the right person (Roosevelt) with the right set of solutions (New Deal) improved and corrected the right system (laissez faire, capitalism, the free market system) such that it survives today and continues to meet people's needs better than all other systems. That is, the essential moral lesson is that our society is basically sound. We have argued that the CT or Citizenship Transmitters' conception of social studies is designed to demonstrate this entire premise. This, we think, is the essential point of it all and not really memorization of the NRA, CCC, 1936, Alf Landon, Court Packing, the Wagner Act and all of the other empty verbalisms.

The problem exercise, therefore, has two functions. It affords students a chance to practice certain skills--in the case we have cited, and in most cases--which center around memorization of discrete and unrelated information. Memorization is designed to train students in the summum bonum: self-discipline. Second, the exercises are wrapped around a hidden goal which is inculcation of a value commitment.

We believe all other aspects of the C.T. social studies curriculum can be assimilated to these two aims. In the 19th Century the mass of largely inaccurate information and vicious stereotypes that passed for geography was designed to contrast the rest of the unfortuante world with the safety, security, rectitude, material plenty and enterprise of the American people. The underlying value commitment behind, say, a discussion of the open market system is invaribaly to contrast the rewards (e.g., high standards

of living, freedom, prosperity, technological superiority) of laissez faire capitalism with the shortages, lack of flexibility and innovation, and general inadequacy of a command economy. The moral purpose resident in the civics problem exercise called "The Problem of Judicial Reform" or "The Problem of Reapportionment" is to persuade students that our political system is indeed capable of healing all existing imperfections through the slow but certain process of democratic reform.[24]

Thus, in contrast to the S.S. position which emphasizes analysis of a preselected problem thought the intellectual tools of members of the discipline, the problem exercise of the C.T. position involved inculcation in particular value outcomes. The value inherent in self-discipline is or appears to be a constant. Commitments to some aspects of what we have elsewhere called the "core" of our culture include values inherent in Protestantism, in democracy or in capitalism,[25] varying from subject to subject or teacher to teacher. But, to repeat our point, the problem is the problem inherent in persuading students. Of course, we assume that for most the value propositions are covert and implicit rather than self-consciously known or explicit. We doubt that teachers are conscious of the underlying process, i.e., that they are actually transmitting faith in particular social institutions, political processes or economic

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[24]In a national conference of the Joint Council of Economic Education, meeting at Cincinnati, Ohio, October 7, 1980, the executive director of the organization repeated once more the claim that the JCEE, in contrast to other organizations which have avowedly indoctrinative aims, strives at all times to be objective. We grant the sincerity of the executive directors and the board's intentions. However, the authors believe that the JCEE understands objectivity to mean that one has already accepted as a basic, underlying, premise that our social and economic system is better than all others. Objectivity is encouraged within this framework. Thus, once one has assumed this, objectivity consists of not making unfair slanted or invidious comparisons between capital and labor or judgments of the free market vs. governmental control. This definition of objectivity, we point out, does not involve an analysis of the basic assumptions involved.

[25]Some years ago we would have probably added "science." We might still be persuaded to add this to the trilogy listed above, provided one understands science to mean "scientism: an uncritical admiration for the forces that have produced marvels of technology and engineering." Such has little to do with what Dewey and his followers referred to as "reflective thinking," "the non-gadgetlike implications of science," or "critical thought."

arrangements. Few teachers, we hazard a guess, would accept our analysis at this point. Most would describe what they are doing as providing neutral and objective information in an unbiased and straightforward manner. Nor would students be able to identify the process of indoctrination that is taking place. However, as we have made the point before, the goldfish is the last to discover water: the individual who is being enculturated as well as those who are doing the enculturation cannot ordinarily identify the process. Thus, when the seemingly eternal Magruder civics text asks students to explain why the bicameral legislature has worked so well,[26] everyone involved--Magruder's successor, McLenaghan, the civics teacher and the students--assume that they are simply being asked to describe a situation. Obviously it is given that a bicameral legislature works well and there is nothing sinister or covertly indoctrinative about asking students to explain how it works so well. The enormously time-consuming nature of a bicameral legislature, loss of integrity involved in innumerable "back-scratching" trade-offs, redundancy and repetition, unceasing conflict between executive and legislature, opportunity for lobbyists and pressure groups to pursue hidden goals, enormous growth of congressional staffs, outright corruption of legislators,[27] the clear inability of a bicameral legislature to legislate our structural problems out of existence—these and many other flaws are not considered, are considered superficially or are understood to be reducible merely to temporary defeciencies that will soon yield to the mechanics of the system itself.

The problem exercise, therefore, which appears to be the approach of Citizenship Transmitters is not quite as Hunt and Metcalf charged frequently: neither a problem to students nor to teachers. It is a problem but in the restricted sense of a. an opportunity to practice certain skills and b. the vehicle by which particular values are

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[26]See the chapter called "The Congress" in William A. McLenaghan, Magruder's American Government. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1972, x, p. 216. The exact question is "Why has bicameralism tended to work so well in Congress?"

[27]We are thinking of the moment of Abscam which is widely held to have revealed only the tip of the iceberg.

indoctrinated.

The Problem from the Standpoint of Reflective Inquiry

In one sense, it is relatively simple to describe the Reflective Inquirer's approach to problems and problem-solving. Dewey and his followers at the turn of the Century and the second and third generation Deweyans such as Hunt, Metcalf, Hullfish--to name only a few--have for many years developed their position around the nature of problem-solving. There is very, very little doubt in our minds as to what the members of the tradition which we named Reflective Inquiry have meant by problem, social problem or problem-solving. Unfortunately, while Dewey did spend a good deal of time spelling out the meaning and significance of problem, his followers did not trace the implications of Deweyan methods for everyday classroom activites. Consequently, while there is a great deal of fairly high level theory written about problems, social problems and problem-solving, it has not proven particularly easy for teachers to translate this body of theory into practice.

Dewey dealt at first in considerable length on the nature of problems in the much-cited How We Think. Using the term "reflective thinking" (which both authors employed in the creation of their term "Reflective Inquiry"), Dewey[28] asserted that the problem-solving process begins first with

> . . .(1) a state of doubt, hesitation, perplexity, mental difficulty, in which thinking originates, and (2) an act of searching, hunting, inquiry to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the perplexity. 29

That which originates the "state of doubt" may be called a problem. A problem is such because, in some sense, it is ". . .unexpected. . .a shock or an interruption

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[28](New York: D.C. Heath, 1910 and 1933.)

[29]How We Think, op. cit., the 1933 edition, p. 12.

needing to be accounted for, identified, or placed."[30]

In his Democracy and Education[31] Dewey repeats essentially the same point: "the starting point of any process of thinking is something going on, something which just as it stands is incomplete or unfulfilled." In his Logic The Theory of Inquiry[32] Dewey defines the term "problematic situation." (italics in original) further:

> The indeterminate situation becomes problematic in the very process of being subjected to inquiry. . . /It/ comes into existence from existential causes, just as does, say the organic imbalance of hunger. . .[33]

A problem in the sense which Dewey designates, i.e., what we have elsewhere called an "inquiry problem," has no relationship to the "problem exercise" we discussed a moment ago. Dewey maintains that a problem exercise which "does not grow out of an actual situation" is "dead work," "busy work."[34] Dewey employs the same analogy the authors have used: a problem exercise, like most mathematical "problems," may have the "semblance but not the substance of scientific activity."[35] The function of a genuine problem is to transfer an indeterminate situation into a determinate one by demarcating what later was called "the field" by Gestaltists into functionally distinctive elements. That is, the individual distinguishes, differentiates and divides the total situation into functionally related, demarcated components. The purpose of this activity is to cast an indeterminate situation arising out of the ground of experience into a problematic one. There is a reason for the transforming process:

> The way in which the problem is conceived decides what specific suggestions are entertained and which are dismissed; what data are selected and which rejected; it is the criterion for relevancy and irrelevancy of hypotheses and conceptual structure.[36]

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[30] Ibid.

[31] New York: Macmillan, 1916, p. 171.

[32] New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938, p. 108.

[33] Ibid., p. 107.

[34] Ibid., p. 108.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

It is, however, in his How We Think that Dewey provides the neatest and most concise summary of the initial stage of problem-solving.:

> Demand for the solution of a perplexity is the steadying and guiding factor in the entire process of reflection. (italics in original) Where there is no question of a problem to be solved or a difficulty to be surmounted, the course of suggestion flows on at random. . .But a question to be answered, an ambiguity to be resolved, sets up an end and holds the current of ideas to a definite channel. . .The nature of the problem fixes the end of thought and the end controls the process of thinking. (italics in original)

Following the lead of such students of Dewey as Griffin and Hullfish at Ohio State University and Bayles at the University of Kansas, Hunt and Metcalf attempted to trace the implications of Dewey's entire conception of problems and problem-solving for social studies. Because--and let us label this as only an impression--both of these authors did not provide a traditional first-you-do-this-and-then-you-do-this format for their teaching methodology and because both were more concerned with the teachers' theoretical grasp of democracy, problem-solving, social problems and the like, their work did not appreciably influence classroom practice. In the revised version of their text Hunt and Metcalf assert that a problem[37]

> . . .is usually an outgrowth of a sensed discrepancy in data or beliefs. Because students vary somewhat in their perceptual fields they do not always agree in their definition of a problem. Teachers find it difficult to get a problem defined so that it is the same problem for everyone in the class. They find it even more difficult to create a problem. To feel that a problem exists, students must come to realize that one or more of their beliefs is inadequate. . .

Collaborating with his friend and colleague at Fresno State University, Morris Bigge, Hunt[38] states that

> Often problem-centered teaching has failed because what teachers have chosen as a 'problem' have not actually been problems in a psychological sense. . .A learning problem is not just an objective issue to be resolved; it must involve psychological tension in a learner.

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[37]Maurice P. Hunt and Lawrence E. Metcalf. Teaching High School Social Studies. Second Edition. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1968, p. 68.

[38]Maurice P. Hunt and Morris Bigge, Psychological Foundations of Education. New York: Harper and Row, 1980, p. 488.

In this work both authors expand upon a theme that they had developed for some years: the dichotomous classification in which "personal" is opposed to "social" is false and misleading. Problems that afflict an individual, that are internalized by a particular person in a particular time and place, often have their roots in disturbed, unsettled, indeterminate or conflicting cultural patterns. Thus, all individual problems have their genesis in society. All social problems eventually become individual problems.

In sum, the Reflective Inquiry approach to problems and problem-solving (i.e., that aspect of problem-solving which we have called "sensing," "problem identification," or, colloquially, "owning a problem,") may be summarized as follows:

> The process called variously reflective thinking, inquiry or problem-solving begins with the ground of experience wherein an individual perceives an indeterminate situation. This indeterminate situation--whether as a result of conflicting values or beliefs, or inadequate knowledge, or simply an unclear path of action--generates psychological tension within the individual. The tension is called by common terms "confusion," "puzzlement," "bewilderment," "being bothered" or "befuddlement." Such language denotes the presence of unease, and from this unease is derived the motivating force to continue the rest of the thought process, which begins with the translation of the indeterminate situation into a problem statement. Without such a translation, without, in short, a problem, thought is random and inchoate; beginning with a problem whose statement controls the end of thought and fixes its course, the subsequent thought is disciplined, serious and systematic. To oppose "social" to "individual" is a mistake, since all individual problems have their genesis in society and all social problems eventually manifest themselves by becoming individual ones.

Reflective Inquiry

The two clearest implications which derive from our research on Reflective Inquiry are first, the nature of social problems and second, the necessity of permitting students to define problems for themselves.

As some social scientists have come to believe, there are no objective social problems "out there," i.e., one cannot point to certain behavior which must necessarily be defined in a certain way. To repeat the point, there is nothing that forces us to define the "drug problem" as reducible to the abuse of marijuana by young people. We can just as well define the problem in terms of the abuse of physican-prescribed medication, as the ungovernable desire of pharmaceutical manufacturers for more profit, or as the tendency of an entire population to seek relief for all pain, conflict and

stress in a bottle. Or we could think of some other way of defining this problem. We may also wish to relate the "drug problem" to some other class of problems, e.g., proverty, anomie and alienation (to use two favorites, if muzzy, sociological catch-words) or to certain technological trends. The point is that if there are no problems out there that must be defined in a certain fashion, one is free to define them as one wishes. One can extend this position as a premise: it is essential for teachers to encourage students to define social problem as they see fit, provided the students follow the process carefully and provided they can identify supporting evidence and make explicit that which is generally left unspoken and implicit.

Second, one might argue that if Dewey is correct, that there is no effective thought without first internalization of a problem, then it is incumbent upon teachers to present students with the descrepancies among data and conflicts that generate the psychological tension essential to problem internalization. Currently and for many decades teachers have scrupulously avoided dealing with problems that do generate tension and conflict. According to the insights of R.I., one of the teacher's major functions--perhaps their most important function--lies in generating problems and utilizing existing conflict for this purpose.

Third, if Dewey is correct--that is, felt tensions should eventuate in hypotheses or explanations--then the problem internalization stage must be extended to all the successive stages. Simply having internalized tension and being uncomfortable is necessary but not sufficient. Students must make use of the motive-generating power that lies in problem internalization to learn the rest of the process, data gathering, data examination, projection of conclusions, use of contrary evidence, etc., etc.

Citizenship Transmission

The approach to problems and problem-solving by those whom we label Citizenship Transmitters has never been worked out in theory. However, we argue that there is

abundant evidence in the day-to-day classroom procedures used by C.T. teachers. As we perceive the practice, teachers identify the problem for students, provide all the information considered essential (ordinarily through the textbook or the text supplemented by teacher lecture) and drive home the appropriate conclusion (ordinarily through after-the-chapter questions, problem exercise, workbooks, recitation practices ordinarily called "discussion.") That is, the "problem" is the problem inherent in figuring out how to ensure that students reach the proper conclusion or arrive at the correct belief. Granted there are very few teachers who would accept this as an accurate description of what they do since it sounds suspiciously like simple indoctrination. However, our observations and a good deal of evidence suggests that this <u>is</u> how teachers proceed. Teachers tend to defend what they are doing as does the Joint Council of Economic Education: they argue that they are being objective and permitting all other positions to be brought up. However, we argue that most teachers are not aware of competing philosophical positions and that they tend to believe that the only real positions exist within some middle range of ideas or values. Objectivity consists, in effect, of permitting Democrats and Republicans to be heard but ignoring Civil Libertarians, followers of Commoner, members of the Klan, the Communist Workers Party and all others who do not fit into a centrist positions.

In any event, for Citizenship Transmission teachers in social studies, the task is to use problems, defined as we think they define them, to promote right belief. The problem is the vehicle for teaching certain essential skills (ranging from map reading to oratorical techniques) which are used to inculcate a moral position, usually having to do with the teacher's perceived concept of a good society.

<u>Social Science</u>

Our conclusion--which is almost as surprising to us as it may be to the reader--is that the contemporary Social Science position is not to be distinguished from the 19th Century Positivist one. Those who follow this position teach the social sciences so that individuals may know how the world functions to the end that they will make

informed, intelligent decisions. The focus here is on insight into data-gathering and basic concepts and generalizations identified by each of the various social science disciplines. When one has learned the method of hypothesizing and gathering and examining evidence taught by the various disciplinarians, one has learned the basis for all future intelligent behavior. One has learned to examine problems as social scientist examine them. These skills are invaluable, will be retained in the future and will permit the adult citizen to make decisions about contemporary social problems in an intelligent and discriminating fashion.

We should like to put some space between this position and that of R.I. Internalizing problems and clarifying one's beliefs about conflict is not of the essence in the social science tradition as it is in R.I. The social science position is that the social problem is as has been described by the social scientist (teacher, textbook author, or supplier of textual material) and both the data and the means used to interpret the data are as the social scientist (teacher, etc.) insist they are. Social scientists are not ordinarily so presumptious or foolish as to insist that they possess the only correct solution to given social problems. However, most of the questions that are asked in social science curriculum units do have implicit within them what are clearly correct responses. And most of the time the social problem is defined for students by the teacher or text author. The essential task for students, then, is to accept the definition and learn the correct mode of analysis which will lead to certain preconceived conclusions.

Conclusion

As we perceive an admittedly confusing state of affairs, it appears as if the correct approach to social problems and problem-solving in social studies class is a merger between the S.S. and the C.T. position. We discern no appreciable influence of the R.I. position in any but a handful of curriculum materials and teachers. A fair statement, we think, of this merger of the two positions is as follows:

> Teachers define the problem for students, provide them with the necessary information and steer them toward the correct conclusion, defending the practice as proper training for their future as citizens in a complex and perilous world. The Social Scientists' emphasis upon learning the ways of a discipline in order to think and behave properly are combined with the Citizenship Transmitters' emphasis upon self-discipline and acquisition of the right convictions and beliefs.

While we are first to grant that this conclusion is hardly cheerful, let alone palatable, we would argue that it does explain teaching behavior that is otherwise inexplicable. It explains why teachers have resisted any Deweyan, Hunt-Metcalf or R.I. position: they never conceived of their function as permitting students either to deal with controversial issues or to internalize problems. It explains why researchers from one decade to the next have found the same emphasis upon indoctrination, either covert or overt. It explains why most social studies teachers think of what they are doing as objective and even-handed treatment of problems: objectivity consists of allowing a half hour to the Democrats and a half hour to Republicans. It explains why there is so little of the real world in most social studies classrooms: all the information students need to deal with "the problem" can be found in the weekly classroom newspaper, the text or the filmstrip. It also explains why social studies teachers have always proven impervious to criticism or reformist positions of any stripe. They already believed that they were doing the right thing in the first place and that the reformers--i.e., ivory-tower recluses who have not had to deal with 150 restless animals all day--just had no understanding of the real conditions under which teachers worked. The academic reformers, further, were urging them to follow a course which they were already following, i.e., dealing with problems and problem-solving.

What we ivory-tower recluses never realized is that social studies teachers were completely convinced that they were doing the right thing. Up until recently we have not bothered to find out what they considered right.